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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SAO PAULO 000348

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PHUM KCRM SOCI SNAR ASEC BR
SUBJECT: SEVEN DEAD IN LATEST WAVE OF PCC-LED RIOTS
IN SAO PAULO'S JAILS AND PRISONS

REF: A) Sao Paulo 319

 B) Sao Paulo 278

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Seven inmates died during a
21-hour rebellion that rocked a public jail in
Sao Paulo state March 23-24. This deadly event
occurred two days after a series of prison
disturbances in four municipalities in the state,
and is believed to have been organized by the
powerful gang, the First Capital Command (PCC).
Riots continue at present. Governor and now
opposition presidential candidate Geraldo Alckmin
believes that the rebellions are politically
motivated. END SUMMARY.

Seven Dead

¶2. (U) A 21-hour rebellion caused seven deaths
at the "Cadeia Publica" (public jail) in Jundiai,
Sao Paulo state, on March 23. The seven inmates
died from asphyxiation from burning mattresses.
The rebellion was in part a protest against
overcrowding in a facility which was built to hold
120 persons, but housed 484. The uprising, which
ended when riot troops entered the facility, is
considered linked to prison riots throughout the
state earlier in the week.

Chaos in the Prison System

¶3. (U) The week of rioting began on Monday,
March 20 at the Odon Ramos Magalhaes Penitentiary
in Ipero, in the interior of Sao Paulo state.
Twenty-two persons were wounded, and the rebellion
continued until riot police arrived. Riots soon
followed at one other penitentiary and in three
"Temporary Detention Centers (CDPs)," also part
of the State Penitentiary system, in response to
the presence of riot police at Ipero. (NOTE:
The availability of cell phones throughout the
state prison and jail system makes it possible for
inmate and gang leaders in different facilities to
coordinate actions. See ref A. END NOTE.)
Disturbances followed at facilities in Maua,

Caiua, Mogi das Cruzes, and Franco da Rocha in Sao
Paulo city. The week of March 27 began with more
headaches for state authorities, with rebellions
in four additional CDPs and at the public jail in
Tatui in the interior.

Overcrowding a Common Characteristic

¶4. (SBU) All the facilities involved in recent
riots are overcrowded. For example, the Franco
da Rocha facility was built to accommodate 600
inmates but currently houses 1,177 persons.
Statistics published by the Secretariat for
Prisons highlight state-wide overcrowding. The
prison system was built to accommodate 95,153
prisoners, but currently incarcerates 122,984.
Furthermore, over 17,000 persons remain in public
jails and holding cells administered by the State
Secretariat for Public Security, despite promises

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by Governor Alckmin to close these facilities and
transfer inmates to the CDPs of the Prison
Administration. Human rights workers decry the
often lengthy time detainees spend in public jails
after arrest. A credible NGO source told Poloff
that the State Secretariat for Public Security,
which administers the public jails, has no budget
to provide inmates with basic toiletry supplies,
let alone social or educational programs, leading
those waiting official transfer to the penal system
in worse conditions than they will face in prison.

Power of the PCC

¶5. (SBU) The PCC is widely believed to be behind
the prison and jail riots of the last week and a
half. (NOTE: Ref A discussed the growing power of
the PCC within the penitentiary system. END NOTE.)
According to press reports, the PCC will continue
disturbances if certain demands are not met, including
an end to the hated "Differentiated Disciplinary
Regime," which allows judges to sentence inmates who
commit crimes while in prison to up to a year in
solitary confinement in high security facilities.
In 2001 the PCC was believed to be responsible
for a series of riots and rebellions that
simultaneously rocked 29 facilities throughout
the state.

Political Motivation?

¶6. (SBU) Press reports indicate that Governor and now
opposition PSDB presidential candidate Geraldo Alckmin
believes that the series of recent prison disturbances
are politically motivated. The rebellions began just
days after AlckminQs nomination was announced by his
partyQs president. (ref B). Francisco de Assis
Santana, Director of Training for the Sao Paulo State
Penitentiary System, told Poloff that overcrowding and
the influence of the PCC are the reasons behind the
riots. Santana states that the PCC, working with
the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra
(Landless Rural Workers Movement - MST), seeks to
destabilize the government. Poloff sought
clarification whether the PCC and MST work together
or merely along parallel lines. Santana stated that
the groups work together in many instances. He pointed
out that in the rural far west of Sao Paulo state, both
MST activists and PCC gang leaders are incarcerated in
the same prisons. Communication in and between

facilities is not a problem. (ref C). Santana foresees
a long year of disturbances, believing that the upcoming
presidential election and the World Cup soccer
championship will create a heated environment inside
prisons.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: This latest wave of prison uprisings
comes just as Governor Alckmin is under the spotlight
as a presidential candidate. Some journalists suggest
that the PCC wishes to draw attention to public security
as AlckminQs "Achilles heel." Whether or not the wave
of disturbances is related to the governor's candidacy,
the power of the PCC within the state detention system
is evident and worrisome. END COMMENT.

¶8. (U) This cable was coordinated/cleared with Embassy
Brasilia.

MCMULLEN